

## 2.29.2008 - Get Ready To Kiss Those Rabbit Ears Goodbye

A little less than a year from now, our Nation will undergo one of the most significant technological changes in history: the transition to digital television or DTV.

On February 17, 2009, television broadcasters will begin airing exclusively digital signals, making analog television sets-those that are not connected to a converter box, cable, or satellite-a thing of the past. The days of rabbit ears and roof-top antennae are over.

There is no question that the digital television transition will benefit our Nation. Switching to DTV will free up some of the channels currently used by analog television stations for advanced wireless service, and set aside others for public safety communications, a key recommendation of the 9-11 Commission.

DTV is a more flexible and efficient technology than the current analog system and transitioning will broadcast DTV's many new services and benefits into homes across southern West Virginia. Digital television means more free channels with crystal clear pictures and sound, and even free, over-the-air high-definition television (HDTV) for consumers with HD television sets.

DTV will also enable TV stations to "multicast" or provide several channels of television programming at once as well as provide advanced data services, such as enhanced closed captioning for the hearing impaired, that are not possible with analog technology.

While transitioning the Nation from analog to digital will be no easy task, most West Virginians will have little to worry about. In fact, it is estimated that only 44,000 West Virginia households-with less than a third of that residing in the Third District-rely solely on analog televisions sets and therefore must transition to DTV or risk losing service.

Consumers need to begin preparing for this monumental change now, not only to enjoy the benefits of DTV, but to avoid losing their television service altogether. To avoid confusion next February, I will work to make sure southern West Virginia

households and families are properly informed and prepared through periodic updates in the media.

Here are the basics of what you need to know:

If, like the vast majority of West Virginians, you have a digital television set or you have an analog television set that is connected to cable or satellite, you are all set for the DTV Transition.

If you have an analog television set which receives signals by means of rabbit ears or an over-the-air antenna and you desire to keep this set in service, you will need to attach a small digital-to-analog converter box to your television set in order continue receiving over-the-air television broadcasts.

The Department of Commerce's National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) has set up a program to help consumers defray the cost of digital-to-analog converter boxes. Every household is eligible for two \$40 coupons, each of which can be used towards the purchase of a converter box. Upon request, the NTIA will mail each household up to two \$40 coupons, each of which can be used towards the purchase of a converter box, and a list of local retailers in the area that sell converter boxes. The coupons expire 90 days after they are issued. NTIA will start mailing coupons to eligible households that have requested them once the converter boxes are available for purchase in retail stores.

To learn more about the Coupon Program and how to apply for coupons, go to the NTIA website at [www.dtv2009.gov](http://www.dtv2009.gov) or call 1-888-DTV-2009. And as always, feel free to contact my district offices for further help and information.

Every one of us has a crucial role to play in this transition. I urge all southern West Virginians to talk to their friends and neighbors-especially the elderly and those in need-about the upcoming DTV transition and help them determine if they need to take action.

As America prepares to kiss those rabbit ears  
goodbye, my staff and I will continue working to educate southern West Virginians about the steps they should take to  
help  
make this monumental transition as easy as possible.